

Virginia, Louisiana and Wyoming delegates present their credentials and are accepted without any questions being asked as to what kind of election was held, or who voted, and yet each state differs in the qualifications required of voters. The conference does not have the right to pass upon delegates either lay or ministerial. When credentials are presented, properly drawn and attested by the proper congregational authorities, no conference has the right to stop to inquire into these people. Grant the conference this right and away goes your distinctively Brethren polity. If the conference may pass upon my pastor's ordination it may pass upon my coat, hat or hair. If it shall say to him, you shall not preach until we say so, it may say to me, you shall not vote until we pass upon your raiment. This to me is vital. I and others have made too many sacrifices and came away from too many friends for the sake of this principle, to see it lightly dealt with. We know what has been the practice and principle of the church all these years. We have too often boasted of our liberty, to have it taken away from us. If those who should be leaders become blinded by anxiety or fear or any other thing and go away from the old land marks there are yet, I trust, enough clear, careful heads to see the danger and call a halt. I may be wrong, but I ask I. D. Bowman, J. D. McFaden, D. C. Moomaw and our dear brother, Henry R. Holsinger whether I am wrong.

To me the Brethren church was the only possible church home because here no man could say, "I am in any degree your Master." We were all "Brethren."

It now remains to be seen what this conference district will do in the future and what notice the National Conference will take of this action.

Some dear friends of mine who suffered in the old days at the hands of the German Baptist authorities have been for years without church membership. When we have asked them to come with us they have shaken their heads and prophesied that in a few years we shall be just the same in polity as our Conservative Brethren. When we urged our congregationalism they simply shook their heads and said, "wait." We thought we had nothing to fear from waiting. Now in soreness of heart we must admit that we have been recreant to the trust committed to us at the disruption and that the little edge of the wedge has entered and not even the wisest of us can tell what the future will hold unless this act be rescinded. Errors may creep in, mistakes be made in the selection and ordination of ministers in the future as in the past. These errors are incidental to human judgment and will with a little time right them-

selves. Let the sense of this Reliance resolution be embodied in our District and National Conferences and then we may surrender our charters, disband our organizations and in bitterness of heart write over our "gospel alone" profession, "Ichabod, the glory has departed."

Fairplay, Md.

THE "ANNUAL MEETING"

B. C. MOOMAW

The *Independent* publishes a summary of the proceedings of the G. B. Annual Meeting at Roanoke, Va., of which the following is a part. "Queries came up from seventeen districts. These concerned conformity to the usages of the brotherhood in giving shape to the clothing, hair and beard, and the non-use of tobacco; whether the sisters should not be required to remove weather clothing (extra wraps) and have their heads covered; * * * whether schools under the supervision of the brethren should teach instrumental music; what is meant by fashionable hats and neckties," etc., etc. We have neither time, space nor disposition to criticise these well worn proceedings of the Annual Meeting. There was much other business of a more sensible and important nature, indicating progress along lines of useful work and spiritual development, and we would cheerfully dwell upon this fact. It is natural that the old leaven should be long dying out, and until its influence is considerably more reduced the cause of our German Baptist brethren will suffer more or less from such reports as that of the *Independent*, from which we have quoted. These queries and debates and decisions of a national conference of full grown men naturally appear childish to readers of the *Independent*, and as a matter of fact creates an opinion of the German Baptists which does them injustice. They are a more intelligent and more evangelical body than would appear on the surface of such reports, and there is as large a proportion of good men and women among them as can be found in any other church. But the best elements among them are not yet articulate. Fossilism, and narrowness, and selfishness, and some less lovely things are yet manifest in the leadership of the church. Take for instance the attitude of the *Gospel Messenger* toward the Brethren church, and toward the EVANGELIST. They ignore us as if we were not. As the Lord commanded Laban concerning Jacob, they speak to us neither evil nor good. They are welcome to Laban's role, if they like it. How charitable and sensible it all is. Pride is at the bottom of it. But as we are commanded to love those who love us not, we will exercise ourselves in this good work, and we will go on holding out the olive branch to those who rent the church asunder by the very meth-

ods which they have since abandoned, and are yet too proud to acknowledge their grievous error.

But notwithstanding all this, we yet believe that the G. B. church is going to be redeemed from its record, and from the policy of its fossils. There is a stalwart wholesomeness among that people of which we are not only hopeful, but justly proud, and the growing intelligence and broad mindedness manifested in the younger generation will in a few years rectify the errors of a grossly inconsistent policy. It is the greatest of pities that what is really valuable to the world, and to society in the Dunkard church must be hidden under a heap of such nonsense as we have quoted from the *Independent*. A bright light, a goodly lamp, has long been hidden under the bushel of childish, unscriptural and frivolous Annual Meetingism. The really valuable and we may say the only valuable part of the great conference at Roanoke were the preliminary meetings, the sermons, lectures, the magnificent and inspiring song service, and the whole spiritual program preceding the conference sessions. When the latter came along, the old order of things usurped its full share of the proceedings, and there was an end of the business of the Holy Spirit. Well might the brethren who originated, and earnestly discussed, and solemnly decided these queries assume to themselves the humble advice of the scriptures, and say, "We are unprofitable servants." If there is any philosophy in the "order" policy of the G. B. church, it is that the conscience of the church, must, in all details of personal conduct, be substituted for the conscience of the individual, and that substitution must be so authoritative that it cannot be regarded merely in the light of advice. It is fundamentally wrong because it involves a discipline of the conscience which proceeds upon wrong principles, resulting not in a spiritual man but a spiritual machine. Carry it to its logical conclusion, and the conscience of the individual disappears, leaving merely a record of "decisions" written all over the place where the conscience was supposed to be. All deliberations and decisions of the church as a body concerning questions of conduct should be clothed with spiritual, not ecclesiastical power, and then the assembled influence, (and there is a mighty spiritual influence in the godly Assembly) bears directly upon the individual conscience in an enlightened, informing, energizing way, constraining it in the only legitimate manner, and with the only kind of power, which is at all productive of lasting and valuable results.

Savannah, Va.

Learn to be easily pleased and life will be full of pleasure.—H. W. Bowman.